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# NAVY MED NAVIGATOR

## In World News:

An aura of optimism surrounded the beginning of a new Middle East peace initiative as Secretary of State Colin Powell headed to the region. One cause for hope was the emergence of a Palestinian prime minister who the Bush administration is counting on to clamp down attacks against Israelis. "I'm encouraged that we may have a fresh start," Powell told reporters before leaving.

Powell intends to push the two leaders into unambiguous approval of a "road map," or blueprint, for peacemaking that is keyed to commitments by both Israel and the Palestinians to end 31 months of fighting and to establish a Palestinian state by 2005.

## In Navy News:

NORFOLK, VA (NNS) — USS Gettysburg (CG 64) rescued four civilian mariners in distress at sea May 3. The mariners were rescued approximately 50 miles east of Mayports, Fla.

The Mayport-based guided-missile cruiser was conducting routine operations off the coast of Mayport when it received a radio distress call. The crew responded immediately, racing to the scene and recovering the four mariners with one of the ship's small boats.

The Capolla had been at anchor earlier in the morning, when a large wave capsized the 23-foot fishing vessel, throwing the four mariners into the Atlantic Ocean. They had spent 10 hours in the water prior to being rescued.

## In Sports:

The Nets defeated the Boston Celtics 94-76 Friday night to take a 3-0 lead in the Eastern Conference semifinals.

That's a deficit no NBA team has ever over come.

Kenyon Martin scored 25 points and Richard Jefferson added 20 on the floor where the Nets were on the wrong end of one of the biggest comebacks in playoff history. It was a victory that inspired the Celtics to celebrate wildly and jump atop the scorer's table, but it was followed by three Nets victories as they won the Eastern Conference finals 4-2.

This series isn't likely to that far. Game 4 of the best-of-seven series is Monday night in Boston.

# Comfort Heads Home

*By LCDR Ed Austin  
Comfort Public Affairs*

The last of Comfort's patients were transferred to medical facilities ashore last week as the ship prepared to go home. After four months away and 56 days on station in the Arabian Gulf participating in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) was ordered to return to its homeport in Baltimore. Comfort's activation for Operation Enduring Freedom and subsequent role in OIF marks the longest deployment of either of the Navy's two hospital ships since both were deployed to the region for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm twelve years ago.

"Comfort has been quite active in the last three years," according to Captain Charles Blankenship, Commanding Officer of the Medical Treatment Facility on board Comfort. "This crew has faced some challenges during this operation and done well. Our readiness is as high as it has ever been. The President's challenge to the military after 9/11 was 'Be Ready'. The CNO has challenged us to 'keep that focus' and we will."

Blankenship recently met with the entire crew as the ship's mission was winding down and told everyone to enjoy some time off with family when they return home, but also reminded them to "keep your bags packed," something he has expressed to his crew many times since the ship was activated to provide support during rescue operations in New York City following the attacks on 9/11.

Having treated nearly 330 inpatients, most of which were combat related injuries, this has been the most operationally significant role for a Navy hospital ship since the Vietnam War, where USS Repose treated more than 9,000 battle casualties and USS



Members of the flight deck crew wave as a helicopter takes the last of Comfort's patients ashore.

Sanctuary spent a record 121 days on the line.

According, Commander Tommy Stewart, who served as a Corpsman during the Vietnam War, and later took a commission as a Navy nurse, "Many of our providers on Comfort have never experienced the types of injuries associated with combat weaponry. As healers, we don't like to see our brothers and sisters in the Armed Forces get injured in combat, but it is our duty to ensure they get the best medical treatment available."

Lt. j.g. Rachael Stephenson (26) of Murfreesboro, TN, who had no previous trauma experience indicated that the staff prepared she and the other junior nurses and Corpsmen well for the types

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# Celebrating Promotions: ENS to LTJG



May 4 2003, marked the day when Comfort Nurses celebrated promotions to the rank of Lt. j.g. They are from left to right back Row: Heather Shattuck, Jennifer Taylor, Daniel McClure, Ernest Hafner; front row: Rachel

Edelson, Marddi Werner, Fe Virginia Delcasal, and Rebecca Carmichael. While not everyone could be present to be honored, all together 18 Ensigns that served on Comfort during Operation Iraqi Freedom will be promoted between April and August.

## MSC mariner uses artwork to accentuate Comfort

*Story and photos by JOSN Erica Mater  
Comfort Public Affairs*

When you walk into the Seaman's Club on the island of Diego Garcia you will probably notice the plethora of life rings decorated to represent

ships that have visited from all over the world. One in particular, is the unique life ring of Comfort. With its artistic banner type heading and drawings of mermaids and the ship, Comfort's life ring is sure to catch your eye.



"I think our life ring is one of the top three in that club," said the creator of the life ring Gerald "Bos'n" Butch.

Butch is the ship bos'n aboard Comfort. As the ship's bos'n, Butch maintains and works with all deck equipment such as mooring lines, cables, and anchors. He also makes sure all equipment is working properly and maintains certification of

all equipment. Butch has been a mariner with the Military Sealift Command for 25 years.

Butch's artistic talent does not only include painting life rings. He has made several signs that can be seen throughout the ship as well as duffel bags, key hooks in the shape of anchors, and has even painted a "Mermaid of the Month" poster to help boost Sailor's morale.

"Artwork has always been a major theme in my life," Butch said.

Butch has always pursued his artistic endeavors from high school through college. In college, he was majoring in drafting and design before he was drafted for the Vietnam War.

After his three-year enlistment in the Navy, Butch went back to college

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## Chaplain's Corner:

# Baptism in Bahrain

*By LCDR Mark Koczak  
Command Chaplain*

Over two months ago the Roman Catholic Chaplain at the base in Bahrain had asked me about doing an Orthodox Christian baptism. You all know we have been rather busy for the last two months. I hoped and prayed we would return to port and I would be able to help this couple and their newborn daughter.

Finally last week, we came to port after 56 days at sea. For most of us, we were thinking of liberty and for some flying home. For me, as one of a handful of Orthodox priests in the Gulf, I was thinking of this young couple, the US sailor and his Ethiopian wife waiting to have their little girl baptized and to become a part of the Orthodox Church.

On the day of the Baptism, of course, I almost missed the liberty boat, but I always leave for anything early. RP3 Moore and I made it to the chapel early. Nice offices and nice space for the chapel on base. We spoke with the chaplains and RPs stationed there about our work on *Comfort* and waited for the parents and child and godmother. They were late because they had to come from the other side of the island.

The Orthodox Baptismal service is about one hour long. My largest fear is usually with older children, that they will not like much of what will happen to them. They get really scared and sometimes the parents do also. With little Queena Simone, however, she was close to being prefect for a five month old with a strange tall man in black and gold singing to her for an hour. Our services are all chanted with no musical instruments, which is different for most non-Orthodox folks to experience. Queena seemed to like me, thank God, and smiled through her anointing with the oil of gladness, the baptism itself totally immersing her in water, the anointing with Chrism, and finally her gift to God, a small donation of her hair.

The parents were very happy, as was I, to have this completed. Queena, the newest member of the Orthodox Church in Bahrain was asleep. Far away from home and in an isolated place, many Orthodox Christians may not see a priest for many months. It was my personal joy and pleasure as a priest and as one of only ten Orthodox chaplains in the Navy, to be in the right place at the right time for Queena and her parents.

# Happy Birthday Nurse Corps

The Navy Nurse Corps will celebrate its 95<sup>th</sup> birthday Tuesday May 13. Onboard the USNS *Comfort*, the remaining nurses from Operation Iraqi Freedom will gather to celebrate both a birthday and the end of this Operation. According to Senior Nurse, Cmdr. Tommy Stewart, NC, these nurses can be proud of the legacy they have built during this operation. They stepped into a totally unfamiliar environment, took charge and proved that Navy Nurses can handle any task placed before them. "I am extremely proud of all of the nurses and Hospital Corpsmen who participated in this Operation", said Stewart. "They are the future of the Navy Nurse Corps and they have proven themselves in battle".

A cake cutting ceremony will be held to mark this special event. Scheduled to be on hand to cut the cake will be Cmdr. Shirley Bowens, NC, and Ensign Rachel Snider, NC, the oldest and youngest Navy Nurses, respectively. In addition to the traditional cake, Capt. Kathy Cadwell, NC, USN, Retired, from San Diego, CA sent along several boxes of "Oak Leaf" cookies for the celebration.

Surgeon General Vice Adm. Michael Cowen, MC, also passed his thanks along to the Nurse corps.

I congratulate you on your many accomplishments and the steadfast support you have bestowed on all of our navy and marine corps members and their families. You have been a major component of force health protection success. I applaud this years numerous successes in the clinical, executive, research, mentoring and especially the operational arenas. Happy 95th birthday! I salute you.

## HOME, from page 1

of injuries they would encounter. However, she added, "Nothing takes the place of hands on experience. I can take that experience back with me and prepare others."

Stewart added, "This was extremely valuable experience for the junior personnel, because they are the next generation of combat casualty care providers. Now they will be able to enter any future combat operations with the knowledge and experience gained from Operation Iraqi Freedom. Most of those who trained during the Vietnam era have retired. Now the remaining few of us can stand relieved of the watch as this generation stands ready to assume the watch."

Just before departing the Gulf Saturday, about 230 crewmembers were moved off the ship to fly back to the US. After a few days of time off, they will be back to their jobs in one of the various medical commands or clinics. While *Comfort's* exact schedule is pending approval, the ship should return to homeport in late May or early June.

*Comfort* deployed Jan. 6 as an effort to reposition forces for possible military actions in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

*Comfort* is one of two U.S. Navy hospital ships operated by the Military Sealift Command for the Navy. It is normally berthed in Baltimore. When operating at the 1,000-bed level, it is crewed by about 60 civilian mariners that operate the ship and more than 1,200 active duty Navy medical and support staff that runs the hospital.



## ART, from page 2

where he finished his degree. After college, Butch found himself working for his family's produce business in his hometown of Alpena, Mich. It was then that he decided to join MSC.

"I longed for more maritime adventures," said Butch. Since then, he has been on every type of ship MSC has except for a tugboat.

Although Butch decided to pursue his sea-going career instead of a full-fledged career in art, Butch has continued to practice his creativity.

"I always try to find something free first. I mainly use scraps from around the ship to make my stuff," said Butch. "A lot of times, it's exactly what you need to get the job done."

During this deployment, Butch, with the help of another MSC mariner, constructed chairs for steel beach out of spools that held mooring and cable lines. Originally, Butch had his eyes on the screws from the spools as material to make his anchor key hooks. However, he looked at the spools again and thought of making chairs out of them. Now, there are about ten "lawn" chairs on steel beach crewmembers can use to sit in.

Butch says most of his projects can be completed in a week, although the chairs only took 30 minutes to complete each one.

When a project is complete, that is when Butch gets his greatest satisfaction and is reminded of his love for art.

"It is very rewarding to see your completed work," said Butch. "It is pleasing to create and it gives me a chance to beautify the world."

At age 50 Butch is looking to retire from MSC in five years at which point he will devote most of his time to art. Butch plans on taking more art classes and honing



From page 2: Gerald "Bos'n" Butch paints a life ring similar to the one that was given to the Seaman's Club in Diego Garcia.

\*This page clockwise from top: Butch works on sewing a new tote bag that will be used for beach gear such as towels, sun block, and sandals.

\*Butch kicks back and relaxes in one of his hand-made beach chairs. The artwork seen on the chairs was also done by Butch.

\*Butch shows us his many creations while he has been aboard Comfort; a duffel bag sturdy enough to carry some of the heaviest tools and a key hook designed to hang on the wall so you can hang your keys.

